

Washington Biodiversity Council

WORKING TO CONSERVE THE DIVERSITY OF LIFE IN WASHINGTON STATE

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The Washington Biodiversity Council was created to develop and promote effective ways to conserve, steward, and restore Washington's stunning biodiversity—the rich mosaic of life that so many Washingtonians

prize. It was established by Governor Locke in 2004 after civic and environmental leaders recognized that the state's conservation strategies were largely reactive and crisis-driven and thus costlier and less effective than they should be. The Council is now working to chart a new and comprehensive approach to conservation—one that is strategic and forward-looking and that recognizes the importance of the state's rich biological diversity to our health, our economy, and our quality of life.

Comprised of 23 members representing a wide range of interests, the Council is directed to:

- Develop a 30-year comprehensive strategy for the state of Washington that sustains its biodiversity for future generations;
- Complete an assessment of incentive programs and propose ways to assist and encourage private landowners to maintain healthier landscapes at all scales;
- Craft a public education component that underscores the importance of biodiversity to our future economy and health; and
- Develop a publicly accessible web site to share information about the state's biodiversity and incentive programs to assist landowners.

The Council must submit its strategy to the Governor and the Legislature by December 31, 2007.

The Council membership includes agriculture, forestry, ranching, local, state and federal government, academia, tribes, shellfish growers, and conservation organizations.

Selected activities:

- Funded and launched two pilot projects, each testing different approaches and incentives for engaging community members and landowners in voluntary stewardship activities. (See other side for more details on the pilot projects.)
- Preparing a set of issue briefs to encourage dialogue on ideas to significantly scale up landowner incentive programs.
- Building the Washington Biodiversity web site, launched in June 2006.
- Assessing the current extent and condition of Washington's biodiversity, including future projections based on historical trends.

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Washington Biodiversity Council's Pilot Projects

Healthy Lands Initiative: Building a conservation economy in North Central Washington.

This 18-month project is intended to develop a shared community vision for how biodiversity conservation can be integrated into the economic and social fabric of North Central Washington, including Okanogan, Douglas, and Chelan counties and the Colville Indian Reservation.

The project will bring together the land conservation, agricultural, and economic development communities to learn more about the region's biodiversity, assess existing and potential incentive programs, and apply new conservation approaches, including habitat farming and grassbanking programs in Moses Coulee, the Methow Valley, and the Wenatchee River watershed.

This project will:

- Raise awareness about regional tools and resources available for enhancing conservation.
- Discover new ways to combine biodiversity conservation with productive and profitable agricultural enterprises.
- Develop plans for implementing incentive programs to benefit riparian and shrub-steppe ecosystems in the Wenatchee River watershed, Moses Coulee, and the Methow Valley.
- Evaluate, synthesize, and share results of the pilot project with neighboring North Central Washington landscapes and other regions of the state.

Citizen Stewardship of the Pierce County Biodiversity Network: Lower White River.

This project funds the Pierce County Biodiversity Alliance for 18 months to recruit and train "citizen scientists" who will survey and monitor biodiversity in their community. It will also engage private and commercial landowners in a process to evaluate and increase the effectiveness of incentive programs in fostering voluntary conservation actions.

The focus for this pilot project is on citizen stewardship within the Puyallup River watershed, where the Pierce County Biodiversity Alliance will focus on a biologically diverse area along the lower White River.

This project will:

- Implement a biological inventory, or "BioBlitz," a form of rapid biodiversity assessment, on the biologically rich lands included within the geographic scope.
- Recruit and train individuals and groups as citizen scientists to survey and monitor biodiversity using the principles and methods of NatureMapping.
- Engage both private and commercial landowners in voluntary incentive programs and assessment of the effectiveness of those programs.